

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

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CHEROKEE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, LE

SUBJECT: RSO CONTACT WITH PLO

1. EMBASSY RSO ASKED FOR ROUTINE APPOINTMENT EVENING OF AUG 23 WITH PLO TO DISCUSS VARIOUS SECURITY MOVEMENTS. AFTER THIS MEETING, RSO O'BRIEN BRIEFED ME ON WHAT HAD TRANSPIRED AND, BECAUSE OF POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DISCUSSION, I

ASKED HIM TO PREPARE MEMORANDUM WHICH IS QUOTED BELOW IN ITS ENTIRETY EXCEPT FOR CERTAIN DETAILS ON SPECIFIC SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS:

2. BEGIN QUOTE. APPOINTMENT WAS MADE AT MY REQUEST TO DISCUSS SECURITY ESCORT ARRANGEMENTS FOR CALL ON KAMAL JUNBLATT AND FOR CONVOY SECURITY FOR TRANSFER OF PERSONNEL BETWEEN BEIRUT AND DAMASCUS SCHEDULED FOR 30 AUG - 2 SEPT. MY PREVIOUS CONTACT, DIRECTOR OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS ABU JAAFAR, WAS NOT PRESENT. I WAS TOLD THAT HE WAS NO LONGER IN LEBANON AND, ALTHOUGH HE IS PRESENTLY IN CAIRO, HE WILL BE GOING TO ROMANIA TO VISIT ONE OF HIS SONS. I WAS RECEIVED BY ABU OMAR EL CHEHAR, ACCOMPANIED BY FATAH MAJOR AHMED (OUR USUAL SECURITY LIAISON OFFICER) AND ONE UNIDENTIFIED INTERPRETER.

3. AFTER COMPLETING ARRANGEMENTS FOR SECURITY, I WAS ASKED IF I HAD READ THE DEAN BROWN ARTICLE IN BEIRUT MAGAZINE

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"MONDAY MORNING," AND I REPLIED THAT I HAD READ THE

ARTICLE. THEY THEN QUESTIONED ME CONCERNING MISSION OF THE TWO U.S. DIPLOMATS WHO WERE VISITING THE EASTERN SIDE. I STATED THAT BECAUSE OF SECURITY CONDITIONS OUR EMBASSY PERSONNEL HAD BEEN UNABLE TO MEET WITH THE CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP. BECAUSE OF THIS, THESE OFFICERS HAD GONE THERE FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS. PLO REPRESENTATIVES AGREED THAT THIS WAS GOOD AND THAT WE HAD TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY (THE CHRISTIANS) WERE THINKING.

4. THEY NEXT ASKED WHAT WAS THE POSITION OF THE USG IN REGARD TO PARTITION OF LEBANON. I REPLIED THAT WE HAD REPEATEDLY INDICATED THAT WE WERE AGAINST PARTITION AND THAT WE DID NOT BELIEVE IT WAS A SOLUTION TO PRESENT LEBANESE CRISIS. THEY INDICATED THEIR AGREEMENT WITH THIS POSITION AND STATED THAT PLO WAS ALSO OPPOSED TO PARTITION AND THAT THEY DID NOT WANT LEBANON TO BE DIVIDED. THEY BELIEVE IT WOULD NOT HELP SITUATION IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD.

5. THEY FURTHER STATED THAT THEY BELIEVED USG WANTED A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. THEY STATED THAT WE (THE USG) SHOULD ASK THE PALESTINIANS, THE PLO, WHAT THEY WANT. THEY WENT ON, ADDING THAT THEY, EVERY PALESTINIAN, WANTED A HOMELAND ON THE WEST BANK AND THE GAZA STRIP AND WANTED TO ESTABLISH A PALESTINIAN STATE IN THOSE AREAS. THEY INDICATED THAT THEY HAD BEEN FIGHTING FOR THIRTY YEARS AND NO ONE HAD ASKED THEM WHAT THEY WANT. OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES, EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA, ETC, HAD HELPED THEM, BUT ONLY FOR THEIR OWN INTEREST. THEY INDICATED THAT THEY UNDERSTOOD IT WAS A DIFFICULT TIME, BUT THE USG MUST FIND A SOLUTION FOR THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE BECAUSE THESE OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES COULD NOT DO SO. THEY SAID THAT ONCE THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE HAD A HOMELAND THEY COULD QUICKLY AND NATURALLY FIND SOLUTIONS TO THEIR PROBLEMS WITH ISRAEL.

6. THIS ENDED MEETING IN PLO OFFICE. IT IS SIGNIFICANT TO NOTE THAT I HAVE MET WITH AND TALKED WITH THESE TWO INDIVIDUALS IN THE PAST. THEIR ENGLISH IS QUITE GOOD AND THEY HAVE NEVER BEFORE NEEDED AN INTERPRETER.

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7. I WAS ESCORTED BACK TO CHANCERY BY MAJOR AHMED. DURING FORMER TRIPS, MAJOR AHMED HAS USUALLY CONFINED HIMSELF TO VERY LIGHT SMALL TALK. THIS TIME, HOWEVER, HE CONTINUED THE OFFICE DISCUSSION. HE STRESSED POINT THAT PALESTINIAN PEOPLE WERE TIRED OF FIGHTING, THAT THEY WANTED A HOMELAND ON THE WEST BANK AND THE GAZA STRIP. HE AGAIN STRESSED THAT OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES COULD NOT BRING ABOUT A SOLUTION, AND THAT ONLY U.S. GOVERNMENT COULD DO SO. HE REPEATEDLY USED

EXPRESSION, "YOU MUST ASK THE PLO WHAT WE WANT," ADDING THAT THE PALESTINIANS WERE LIKE ISRAELIS--THEY TOO WANTED A HOME WHERE THEY COULD LIVE WITHOUT WEAPONS. HE REPEATEDLY REMARKED THAT I COULD TALK TO THEM, AND THAT, ALTHOUGH WE TALKED SECURITY, WE COULD TALK. END QUOTE.

8. COMMENT. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT PLO ON THIS OCCASION WAS MAKING SPECIAL EFFORT TO GET ITS MESSAGE ACROSS, FIRST BY USING INTERPRETER TO MAKE SURE THERE WAS NO MISUNDERSTANDING, AND SECOND BY HAVING MAJOR AHMED REPEAT THEIR PRESENTATION WHEN HE ACCOMPANIED RSO BACK TO CHANCERY. IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT PLO CHOSE TO RAISE THESE MATTERS IN THE SY CHANNEL. PLO IS OBVIOUSLY AWARE OF OUR DESIRE TO USE THIS CHANNEL ONLY FOR SECURITY MATTERS BUT DECIDED TO RAISE THIS SUBJECT ANYWAY BECAUSE OF ITS IMPORTANCE TO THEM AND SO THAT THEY COULD DENY THAT APPROACH HAD BEEN MADE IF WORD OF IT SHOULD LEAK OUT IN WAY THAT WAS EMBARRASSING TO THEM. THEY ARE ALSO UNDOUBTEDLY AWARE THAT THIS CHANNEL PROVIDES DIRECT ACCESS FOR THEM TO HIGHEST LEVELS IN DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

9. PLO HAS TAKEN A BATTERING IN LEBANON, THEIR POLITICAL SUPPORT FROM OTHER SOURCES IS SUYSPECT, AND THEY HAVE EXPRESSED VIEW THAT IF THEY ARE DRIVEN OUT OF LEBANON THEY WILL HAVE NO PLACE ELSE TO GO. THE MODERATE LEADERSHIP MAY NOT HAVE ITS BACK TO THE WALL, BUT IT HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY WEAKENED BY RECENT EVENTS, AND HAS BEEN RETHINKING ITS STRATEGY. WE BELIEVE THIS APPROACH REPRESENTS CAREFULLY PREPARED AND SERIOUS INITIATIVE BY MODERATE ELEMENTS IN PLO AND URGE THAT IT BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED.
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